

New frontiers in Open Access for Collection Development: Perspectives from Canadian Research Libraries

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Abstract:

As the push for open access (OA) burgeons around the globe, it is important to examine OA as it relates to collection development practices. Canada has its own particular set of characteristics and approaches to service delivery based on its history and context. Like our global colleagues, opportunities for collection development in Canada include the support of OA journals, repositories, monographs and electronic theses. The strengthening of OA in Canada is tied closely with other issues. Political and educational realities as well as geographic spread are affecting the way the movement is strengthening and impacting collection development practices. In this context, we share the results of a study examining the scholarly communication landscape in Canadian research libraries. The results of interviews with librarians, who are leaders in scholarly communication activities at their own institutions, showcase the prominent role OA plays in enhancing collections at Canadian institutions. Collaboration and the role of cooperative collection development are covered. The paper concludes with recommendations for strengthening access to open scholarship in libraries regardless of their geographic location.

Keywords: Open Access; Collection Development; Canadian Research Libraries; Interviews; Scholarly Communication

1 INTRODUCTION

Open Access (OA) is defined as literature that is digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions (Suber, 2013). From its inception, librarians have been strong advocates of OA. Suber claims, “Librarians lobby for OA mandates. They write to their representatives in the legislature. They make phone calls and visit. They network and organize. They communicate with one another, with their patrons, and with the public. They launch, maintain, and fill repositories. They write up their experiences, case studies, surveys, and best practices. They pay attention. On average, they understand the issues better than any other stakeholder group, including researchers, administrators, publishers, funders, and policymakers” (Poynder, 2011).

Librarians, whether public, special, or academic, involved in collection development are increasingly playing a transformative role in the OA movement. The role as selector, assessor and mediator of quality information is more important than ever.

As collection development librarians embrace OA, they are confronted by three realities:

1. Users are overwhelmed by choices and information.
2. Libraries are struggling to keep up with budget cuts and increasing demands.
3. Community engagement is on the rise, citizen science is catching on, and public access policies to research results are being adopted by governments and mandated by funding agencies.

Many libraries, particularly in the Western world, are building institutional repositories (IRs) to house the intellectual product of their communities. Genoni (2004) concluded that IR’s “are, after all, simply another form of collection, which should be subject to established levels of decision making with regard to collecting priorities, and the same level of management with regard to associated matters, such as access and preservation.” Lewis (2013) foresees a transformation of academic library collecting practices to include digitization of unique content. While discussing the role of digital collections such as Google Books, the Open Content Alliance and Hathi Trust, he envisions the dispensing function of libraries being replaced by web scale enterprises and not by individual local library collections. This is a larger view of library collections.

Canadians have been advocates of OA from its earliest inception. Leslie Chan, Jean-Claude Guédon and Stevan Harnad were the original signatories of the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI, 2002). More recently at the urging of Québec Library Directors, the Conference of Rectors and Principals of Universities of Québec (CREPUQ) signed the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities (CREPUQ, 2012). Transforming scholarly communication and OA publication is part of the strategic plan of the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL).

Our 2012 study, funded by CARL under a research in librarianship grant, was designed to explore the new scholarly communication environment which libraries are facing and their plans for the future. This paper reports on our findings which focus on the responses that relate specifically to the impact of OA on collection development in academic research

libraries belonging to CARL. Based on our findings, suggestions are offered for keeping up with changing paradigms in collection development and embracing an OA future.

2 BACKGROUND

Previous literature has addressed the impact of OA on collection development. Genoni (2004) emphasized that IR content development policies should be incorporated into a library's existing collection policy documents. Bailey (2007) identified specific situations where the move to OA could result in potential savings for librarians in collection development costs and in serials management. Mullen (2011) recognized the need for practical strategies to include 'free to read, free to library' material in library collections. She noted that collection development librarians should look to the web for quality scholarly content to add, organize, promote and make discoverable and accessible.

Libraries are moving into the publishing realm. Publishing is arguably a part of collection development. Mullen (2010) stated that, "With libraries moving toward digital publishing as a central or peripheral role, librarians have had to envision the library as not just a place to hold collections but as a possible creator of scholarly publications." More recently, Lewis (2013) advised libraries to actively manage the transition to OA by supporting OA initiatives such as deposit mandates, OA journals and OA author funds.

The literature on OA and collection development in Canada is relatively sparse. Morrison and Waller (2008) provided an overview of library advocacy and commitment, IRs, and publishing in Canada. Richard et al. (2009) examined the role of librarians and libraries supporting open access publishing initiatives and services in the Canadian context. Shearer (2010), in an environmental scan of the Canadian academic publishing landscape reviewed new models of scholarly publishing with a focus on library-publisher collaborations. Morrison et al. (2010) surveyed these organizations to determine support for open access journals using a wider lens covering all libraries that are members of the Canadian Knowledge Research Network (CRKN) as well as Canadian university presses. CRKN is the national site licensing consortium in which 75 universities are participants.

Fernandez and Nariani (2011) found that a number of Canadian research libraries support author publishing in OA journals through institutional memberships or campus-based author funds. In a survey of Canadian institutions, Stuart and Nelson (2012) found that 63% of libraries held electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) as the largest collection in their IRs. Other collections include oral histories, journal articles, images and research data.

A report jointly authored by a CARL and CRKN working group recognized the need to engage with vendors to promote OA publishing models. They proposed the formation of a group which, would, among other things, advocate for transparency about the relationship between OA article processing charges and subscription costs, and would negotiate better pricing for these charges. This group would also help negotiate more liberal author licensing such as Creative Commons and compliance with research funders' OA mandates (CARL/CRKN OA working group, 2012).

3 METHODOLOGY

We used an exploratory qualitative research approach with in-depth telephone interviews to learn more about the scholarly communication landscape in Canadian academic libraries. We interviewed one individual from each of the 29 academic libraries that are members of CARL. CARL's research libraries are located in 9 of Canada's 13 provinces and territories: British Columbia (3), Alberta (2), Saskatchewan (2), Manitoba (1), Ontario (12), Québec (6), New Brunswick (1), Nova Scotia (1), and Newfoundland (1).

Individuals with some level of leadership or involvement in scholarly communication services and OA initiatives at their institution were selected to be interviewed. We interviewed six senior university librarians who were top-level administrators, and ten associate university librarians with direct responsibilities for areas such as Acquisitions, Collections, Information Resources, Digital Library, IT, and Discovery Services. Thirteen participants had aspects of scholarly communication and/or collections oversight responsibilities.

Interviews were semi-structured and open-ended to allow for a conversational flow and for interviewers to probe responses from participants. Questions pertained to aspects of scholarly communication including institutional services and initiatives, changing organizational structures, collaboration both inside and outside the library, staff roles, education and training, and future visioning for libraries.

Ethics review was conducted at both the researchers' institutions. For the purpose of this paper, we have mined our interview data for aspects relating to collection development and its interplay with OA.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Communication, collaboration and collective action

Participants' responses indicate that they were looking for collaborative strategies with a focus on consortia, pooled resources, and archiving for the country.

Respondents were proud to note the strong OA developments initiated in Canada e.g. Public Knowledge Project (PKP), Érudit and Synergies (see section 2). They agreed that Canada's tight cohort of universities and many respected leaders and OA advocates may facilitate national action. Library Directors and Chief Librarians mentioned that Canadian libraries were strong collaborators. Participants extolled the value of collaborative initiatives such as CRKN and the Ontario Council of University Libraries' Scholars Portal.

However, even with comments on our successes in communication, collaboration, and collective action, respondents also mentioned our weakness in this area. A third of the participants expressed frustration that their library was operating in a vacuum: *"We work in silos and we don't talk to one another about what we are doing. We could make life a lot easier by sharing things that we have developed. Trying to figure out ways to network more effectively across the country is important."* Another echoed, *"We are reinventing the wheel and we are not sharing our expertise. [...] We may hear about things here and there from conference attendance and such, but we do not have a group of people that we can sit down and talk to. We desperately need to improve in this area."*

One AUL tried to explain the Canadian collaborative dichotomy with these words: *“In Canada we can do things nationally that are not possible in the US. CARL is taking the lead in many areas but sometimes, I think, we are spinning our wheels; we are talking to ourselves and to the converted and somehow not having the type of support that we see in the UK and the US from federal granting bodies. I envy that the UK has JISC, and the US where they have all these foundations that fund major pilot projects that help develop the models and move us forward.”*

4.2 Support for OA publishing

All 29 CARL libraries have IRs. Participants reported on the value of IRs and ETDs for disseminating institutional scholarship. Many recognized their potential as important global discovery systems. Most respondents reported that their institutions were pursuing journal publishing initiatives by using Open Journal Systems (OJS). Québec librarians commented on the value of Érudit, a platform for the hosting of French language journals and theses. The Synergies consortium which offered a Canada-wide distribution platform for scholarly journals was seen as transformative for publication and dissemination of Canadian research in the humanities and social sciences. The end of Synergies funding in 2011 was a cause for concern among participants.

There was consensus that libraries should foster a deeper collaboration with Canadian publishers, university presses and learned societies in order to collectively strengthen and promote OA publishing. *“To do so”, one participant explained, “will require us to develop and nurture the relationship between librarian and publisher.”* Some participants worried that without Synergies Canadian journals were at risk of going elsewhere to be published. Several participants felt that Canadian journals still needed support: *“We need to create a Canadian consortium of journals: one big package that would market all Canadian science, social sciences and humanities journals. This would create an economy of scale for Canadian publishing. It would be like a Project Muse but a Canadian version.”* Hosting fees were mentioned by at least one participant.

A number of participants reported that their institution was looking to play a role in e-book publishing using Open Monograph Press: *“Scholarly monograph publishing in Canada is a niche market. Despite the expected low sales, the work remains extremely valuable to scholars and to the research cycle.”*

While many see the library role in publishing as a natural fit, several participants cautioned that librarians had the tendency to be overly positive and naive in their approach and commented on the lack of understanding about the publishing profession. Participants felt that staff who support the library’s publishing activities need to have an understanding of various areas: cataloguing, acquisitions, publishing models, editing, peer review, contract processes, and various meta-data standards.

Participants shared instances where their libraries were scanning and digitizing local heritage and special collections. Some of these projects have been made possible by external funding, donors or research grants. These collections were in many cases openly available and considered as contributing to community engagement as well as to campus education and research. Some participants noted that their library was partnering and supporting their local faculty or heritage organizations in the production of web archives.

4.3 OA policies

Participants agreed that OA policies stimulate the deposit of research articles in IRs. Participants mentioned one university OA policy, one faculty-based OA policy, a departmental policy, and several librarian policies or commitments to OA. Participants spoke about the difficulty in getting researchers to deposit their research articles in IRs, inspite of library mediation.

4.4 OA Author Funds

Participants discussed the ways in which their library supported OA publishing, such as through author funds, institutional memberships with OA publishers, and grants for publishing innovations. Depending on the library, these funds were budgeted either from the collections budget or from a special grant or donor award. Regardless of the approach, participants recognized that an author fund helped to advocate and promote the transition to OA publishing with their faculty.

One librarian mentioned that the library was a founder member of the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), the advocacy organization for creating change in scholarly communication. Another mentioned that their library supports the physics arXiv, a freely accessible preprint service started by physicists and presently hosted by Cornell University Library.

4.5 Distribution of OA responsibilities

Participants saw great value in a shared approach to OA activities. Respondents noted that OA does not form part of job descriptions of most librarians at their institutions. A chief librarian mentioned wanting to embed scholarly communication and OA more thoughtfully into the job descriptions of all her librarians. Another librarian echoed *“Everyone needs to buy into this. If it is just a small group then it won’t go anywhere. But if everyone sees it as part of what they are doing then we can really get some momentum going.”* One Associate University Librarian stressed the importance for librarians to have the skills and training to collect OA materials and open data which can be used in research and teaching.

One participant lamented, *“Without OA being part of their specific responsibility, librarians are feeling that it is just another thing that they have to take-on on top of all the others things they have. It is hard for them to keep up. OA developments require time and commitment.”* Some libraries are proactive with committees involved in promoting staff education, while others depend on individual interests. OA week is sometimes used for staff development.

4.6 Promotion of OA resources

Library directors used their positions on campus committees to spread the message. Interview participants felt that promotion was a key to the usage and discovery of OA resources, and many wished for greater support and cohesion in the ways OA materials are promoted between institutions and across the country. However, participants indicated that Canadian libraries were promoting OA materials to their patrons in uneven and disparate ways. Librarians used their liaison relationships with faculty and students to promote OA resources. Events were organized during Open Access Week, but attendance at these events

was sparse. OA messages were often embedded in publicity about the repository and author funds. Web pages and online guides about OA were fairly common.

4.7 Assessment of OA collection development

Assessment of OA collections and the uptake of OA funds was on the radar at many Canadian libraries but none of the participants reported having a formal approach to assessment. They felt that OA initiatives were too new for assessment strategies to be in place. Most reported though, that they reviewed usage statistics in the form of hits and downloads of items in their IR. Environmental scans and user surveys were conducted locally on an ad hoc, random basis.

5 DISCUSSION

The findings included positive reflections on the development of OA in Canada. The optimism, however, was tempered with concern for global, regional and institutional economic and political realities. Interviews occurred during four significant moments: increases to Canadian Access Copyright licensing fees for universities; the Elsevier boycott by academics; the Harvard journal cancellation announcement; and student unrest in Québec in response to cutbacks in education. The impact of these events on libraries is reflected in the responses.

5.1 Communication, collaboration and collective action

The findings demonstrate that librarians embrace the shared infrastructure and the consortial approach with OA collection development in Canada. CARL members belong to regional consortia and to CRKN, helping to achieve cooperative collection development. CRKN's consortial and collaborative support for OA is evident in their recent support for new publishing models such as SCOAP3 (Sponsoring Consortium for Open Access Publishing in Particle Physics) (CRKNa, 2013). CRKN has also been involved in the support of established initiatives such as Érudit which provides access to many French language journals (CRKNb, 2013). Another example of a successful regional consortium is the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL), which has negotiated access to a package of OA books published by Canadian research presses.

CRKN has agreed to work with publishers to integrate OA measures into consortia licenses (CARL/CRKN OA working group, 2012). Canadian research libraries and their associations need to continue to enhance the dialogue and communication between libraries in order to work together on these issues.

5.2 Support for OA publishing

Interviews show that Canadian academic libraries are embracing OA publishing in a large way. Impetus for the development of IRs has come from the recent decision by Libraries and Archives Canada to accept only electronic theses. ETDs form a major part of collections in IRs and we expect more of our institutions to have ETD mandates. This initiative bodes well for the future of IRs as graduate students and faculty see the benefits of OA to their research and the global exposure of this form of scholarship. Demonstrations of value can help promote the filling of IRs with other documents such as working papers,

reports and research articles. Promotion of repository material to user groups and inclusion in discovery systems is the way forward.

The adoption of Érudit by CRKN has provided sustainability for these journals. A more sustainable approach for Synergies journals needs to be found. We are encouraged by the plan to locally archive and host licensed materials for Synergies journals by OCUL. Collaboration with local faculty editors was one of the outcomes of this project. These initiatives create a much needed visibility for Canadian publications while allowing librarians to develop skills and expertise. Charging for hosting services at the institutional level may allow for sustainability.

The digitization of heritage material is becoming increasingly prevalent in Canadian libraries. Many libraries have electronic text centres and e-scholarship departments. Digital scholarship is the new wave of the future. Concordia University has recently launched a new visual arts archive, Artexte, which is OA. Libraries are adding new positions devoted to this area i.e. digital assets librarian. Canadian libraries also contribute local print items that are in the public domain, for scanning and digitization to the Internet Archive. Librarians will no doubt see more digitization initiatives taking place in their workplaces in the future. Collection development librarians need to have the expertise and the resolve to expose these resources to users.

5.3 OA policies

OA policies can help fill repositories. Institutional and funder mandates can play a role encouraging deposit. Unlike many countries, we do not have many strong mandates. Policies existing within Canadian institutions vary in scope. According to ROARMAP 18 Canadian institutions and funders have OA policies. One of the three national research funding agencies, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, has an OA mandate, but compliance continues to be an issue. Librarians can encourage deposit into PubMed Central Canada or into the IR. They can also help researchers find appropriate OA journals in which to publish. Greyson et al. (2009) surveyed libraries and research offices in Canada on their support for OA policies. They conclude that librarians feel a strong sense of mandate to carry out open access-related activities and provide research supports, while research administrators have a lower sense of mandate and awareness. Others have shown how librarians can assume new roles in helping CIHR grantees fulfil OA policy requirements (Fernandez et al., 2010). Collectively, these actions help promote open scholarship.

5.4 OA Author Funds

In addition to our findings which indicated that many Canadian research libraries provide OA author funds or institutional memberships to OA publishers, libraries are also allocating funds for the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and arXiv, which are examples of collective funding models. OA author funds or institutional membership are largely taken from collection budgets. Author funds in Canadian libraries provide sustainable mechanisms to support OA publishers who do not have access to the funding sources of traditional subscription publishers. Canadian libraries are listed on the Compact for Publishing Equity (COPE) website along with their policies for dispensing funds. Recent author funding announcements from the University of Manitoba and the University of Toronto have helped to reinforce the importance of this approach in Canada.

5.5 Job responsibilities and training

It was evident from our conversations that training and professional development of librarians in open access and scholarly communication practices need to be enhanced. Some efforts have been made to accommodate this need. In late 2012, librarians in Ontario, for instance, organized a workshop on scholarly communication under the aegis of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). It is hoped that other professional associations will continue to provide educational opportunities for librarians to improve their skills and understanding of OA. The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) has been in the forefront with the last annual conference adopting an OA theme. It would be helpful if schools of library and information studies include an introduction to OA as part of the curriculum.

5.6 Promoting OA collections

Operationalizing OA collection development at the local level remains elusive. We did not specifically ask the question whether libraries are including OA resources in catalogues or search discovery tools, so were not provided with this information. We know that many Canadian libraries contribute out of copyright holdings to the Internet Archive. Many are also supporting members of DOAJ and Bioline International, the latter creating visibility for journals from developing and transition countries. Incorporating these items into library holdings and providing access through link resolvers is a logical step to discovery. Redirecting collections funds specifically towards OA resources will help build OA collections. Collection development librarians may wish to use a rubric developed for analyzing and evaluating web-published scholarship while selecting OA resources (Troyano and Wieringa, 2013). Further, we are encouraged that in accepting the 2012 recommendations from the CARL-CRKN OA working group report, CARL library directors have agreed to work locally on campus engagement with OA.

5.7 Assessing OA activities

Participants came from institutions where OA assessment is not taking place in a systematic way. There is clearly a need for standardized assessment tools to evaluate current OA practices. There is also a need for research into metrics and the impact of Open Access publishing for faculty tenure and promotion requirements. This is a universal problem but Canadian librarians need to develop a better understanding of the issues if they are going to promote OA at their institutions.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Scholarly Communication is seen as an important role for librarians and there appears to be momentum for open access within Canadian research libraries. Our study represents an exploratory snapshot of OA in Canadian libraries during an interesting time. With the push for OA internationally impacting local responses, participants drew inspiration from these happenings and shared thoughts on what the future should look like. Participants willingly took part in these conversations and openly shared their thoughts and opinions with us. The results provide important context and revealed a passion and commitment to OA that may not have been possible in a web-based survey.

More research by librarians would help establish the place of OA in library practice. The following areas of research could be explored more fully: an examination of librarian roles in access and discovery of OA collections; digital collections and the entrenchment of OA principles; assessment studies targeting the return on investment in OA collection development; impact of various OA publishing models on collection development.

Collection development librarians seeking to embrace OA in their roles are encouraged to: collaborate, communicate and share OA materials; support small presses and publishers in a transition to OA; digitize heritage material and make it openly available; include OA materials in collections; and promote OA collections to users.

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